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Lebanon Hostages Said to Send Letter to Reagan

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BEIRUT, Lebanon, Nov. 8 — A letter of appeal to President Reagan that was apparently signed by four American hostages was delivered today to a Western news agency here.

In the letter, the hostages called on Mr. Reagan to reconsider his refusal to negotiate with their captors, who are believed to be Moslem fundamentalists.

[In Washington, the Reagan Administration again rejected the idea of negotiating with the captors. "The United States policy on negotiation with terrorists has not changed," said Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman.]

The appeal to Mr. Reagan, along with a bundle of letters in what appeared to be the hostages' handwriting, was delivered to The Associated Press bureau here. It arrived a day after an anonymous caller telephoned a Western news agency here and said all six Americans believed to be held hostage in Lebanon had been killed. The caller, who spoke Arabic, purported to represent the Islamic Holy War organization, a secret group believed to be made up of Shiite activists who espouse the principles of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

The caller said the killings had been carried out because "indirect negotiations between us and America had arrived at a dead end."

On Thursday, the police searched a site where the bodies were said to have been dumped but found nothing.

"We have just been told that some-

one has claimed that Islamic Jihad has killed all of us," a separate letter addressed "to the A.P. and all news media" said. Jihad is the Arabic word for holy war.

"Obviously," the letter said, "this is not true. Our captors say it was an attempt by the U.S. Government to spoil negotiations."

The appeal and the letter to news organizations were signed by Terry A. Anderson, the chief Middle East correspondent of The Associated Press; the Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, a Roman Catholic priest; David P. Jacobsen, the director of the American University hospital in Beirut, and Thomas M. Sutherland, the university's dean of agriculture.

Nate Polowetzky, foreign editor of The Associated Press, said Mr. Anderson's signature was authentic.

The document did not bear the signatures of two other Americans who may be held hostage — William Buckley, a diplomat, and Peter Kilburn, an American University librarian. A blurred photograph, was issued last month showing what was said to be Mr. Buckley's body after he was said to have been killed, but American officials have said they could not draw any conclusions from the photograph.

In their letter to President Reagan, the hostages said their captors had told them that Mr. Buckley, a political officer at the United States Embassy, "is dead."

Islamic Holy War had took responsibility for abducting the Americans in West Beirut in the last two years.

"Mr. President: We are appealing to you for action," the letter delivered today said. "We have read and heard over the past months of your refusal to negotiate with our captors, and your rationale for it. We understand it, but do not agree."

'You Negotiated'

"You negotiated over the hostages from the T.W.A. plane, and such negotiations have been held repeatedly and successfully by other countries — Israel, Egypt, El Salvador and the Soviet Union."

The reference to the T.W.A. plane was to the hijacking by Shiite gunmen last June in which 39 American passengers were held hostage for 17 days. They were freed after mediation that was set in motion by President Hafez al-Assad of Syria.

"You, and they, did so because you believed that saving the lives of innocent hostages should be the primary goal," the letter said. "We are asking for the same consideration. There is no alternative."

"You have tried other routes but have not won the release of a single hostage in more than 18 months. We have no chance of escaping and our captors say if any attempt is made to rescue us, they and we will all die."

A.P. staff members in Beirut said they had identified Mr. Anderson's

handwriting and signature. One letter from Mr. Anderson was addressed to his family.

The package was delivered to the A.P. office by an unidentified youth. A guard outside the building said the letters were in a blue folder sealed with cellophane tape.

On Oct. 4, the Holy War organization said in a statement that it had "executed" Mr. Buckley, 57 years old, in revenge for the deaths of 70 Arabs in an Israeli air strike against the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunis.

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In their message, the four Americans made no mention of Mr. Kilburn, who disappeared early last year. Islamic Holy War also has made no mention of Mr. Kilburn in recent months.

Another hostage, the Rev. Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian minister, was released unharmed Sept. 14 after 16 months in captivity.

After returning to the United States, Mr. Weir said at a news conference that he had seen Mr. Anderson, Mr. Jacobsen, Father Jenco and Mr. Sutherland before he was freed, but that he knew nothing about the fate of Mr. Buckley and Mr. Kilburn.

The Holy War organization sent a message with Mr. Weir, offering to release the American captives if the Government of Kuwait freed 17 men held in prison there. The men, members of a fundamentalist group linked to Iran, have been convicted of carrying out bomb attacks against the United States and French Embassies in Kuwait.

The four hostages said they were kept in small damp places 24 hours a day, "without proper exercise, sanitation, fresh air or balanced diet." They added: "We have only intermittent access to outside news. It is difficult to remain cheerful and optimistic when we see no sign anywhere of progress toward our release."